

OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS
STRATEGIC PLAN
FISCAL YEAR 2005 AND BEYOND

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The Office of Human Rights Strategic Plan FY 2005 And Beyond

The Fairfax County Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) was established in 1974. The Office of Human Rights (“the Office”) is responsible for providing staff support to the Commission, which is charged with enforcing the Fairfax County Human Rights Ordinance (Chapter 11 of the Code of Fairfax County, Virginia referred to hereinafter as “the Ordinance”). The Executive Director of the Commission is authorized to receive complaints alleging a violation of the Ordinance and after investigation to render a staff finding about whether the Ordinance appears to have been violated. The Commission hears appeals of the Executive Director’s findings, holds public hearings, and renders decisions about whether the Ordinance has been violated. The Executive Director is authorized to hire staff as approved by the Board of Supervisors in order to secure effective compliance with the Ordinance.

Historically, the Office has increased its productivity over the years. In spite of the increase in productivity, due largely to the increase in the receipt of new cases each year, a large pending inventory of cases is left at the end of each year causing delays in the processing of newly received cases. Recently, in FY 1999 and 2001 the Office received new staff to help address this problem. The events of September 11, 2001, resulted in an overall loss in revenue to the County and, consequently, budget reductions. In order to function within this environment, there were delays in filling staff vacancies, which also impacted production. Currently, the Office has 22 positions as follows:

Executive Director
Human Rights Specialist IV
Human Rights Specialist III (3 positions)
Human Rights Specialist II (13 positions)
Administrative Assistant V
Administrative Assistant III
Administrative Assistant II
Administrative Assistant I

We are organized into teams as follows:

Management Team

Director
Administrative Assistant V
Human Rights Specialists IV
3 Human Rights Specialists III

Leadership Team

Director
Administrative Assistant V
Human Rights Specialists IV
3 Human Rights Specialists III
Administrative Assistant II
3 Human Rights Specialists II

Three Investigative Teams

Human Rights Specialists II(s)
Human Rights Specialists III (Supervise)

Administrative Support Team

Administrative Assistants
Administrative Assistant V (Supervise)

The Office has adopted new vision and mission statements and formal declarations of its organizational values. Taken together, these reflect the Office's guiding principles. To operationalize these principles the Office has developed this Strategic Plan. The Plan includes the specific actions that the Office is undertaking to move toward becoming a higher performing organization. As additional strategic initiatives are identified necessary revisions will be made to the Strategic Plan. Thus, the Plan is a dynamic document intended to meet the expectations of our elected and appointed leadership and the evolving needs of the public.

In preparation for the development of this Strategic Plan, the Leadership Team acting in concert with the Management team took several affirmative steps aimed at objectively measuring the Office's strengths and weaknesses. One of these was to send two study teams to sister agencies to benchmark and evaluate their best practices. The teams visited the Pinellas County Human Rights Commission in Florida and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. The team reports on these visits can be found in Appendices A & B. The Leadership Team also surveyed the parties and their representatives who were involved in the Office's complaint and investigative processes over the course of the last year. The survey results are attached at Appendix C.

LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

The Executive Director has chosen to manage the Office in a consultative, participative system of leadership and management. Consequently, the Executive Director has formed a Management Team and a Leadership Team. The Charter for the Leadership Team and is located in Appendix D. The current members of Leadership Team are:

Warren Bailey
Hikmat Beaini
Annie Carroll
Michael Cash
Pamela Gray

Wyvetta Hill
Nancy Long
Vincent Norwood
Al Santiago
Ifeyi Ugokwe

The current members of the Management Team are:

Warren Bailey
Annie Carroll
Michael Cash

Pamela Gray
Nancy Long
Al Santiago

There is no hierarchy in the Leadership Team and decisions are made by consensus. The role of the Leadership Team is to develop strategies for continuous improvement of the organization. Strategic ideas from the Leadership Team are delivered to the Management

Team with recommendations for implementation. Within the Management Team, the Executive Director makes the ultimate decisions after consultation with Team members.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The vision, mission, and values are the guiding principles that create a work culture for a successful, high performing organization, focusing the energy of the organization on a common goal. These principles guide both the strategic direction of the organization and shape the day-to-day decisions about what the organization does and how it does it. Consequently, the Office, with input from throughout the organization, the Commission, and the public, has developed:

- A [vision](#) that is intended to provide direction for the organization.
- A [mission](#) statement that describes the purpose of the organization and what it does.
- A [statement of values](#) which describes our beliefs and how we will treat each other and our customers.

OUR VISION

We are dedicated to improving the quality of life in Fairfax County so every person may fully enjoy all of the opportunities available in an environment free of illegal discrimination.

OUR MISSION

To institute an affirmative human rights program of positive efforts to eliminate discrimination and to provide the public recourse for discriminatory acts.

OUR VALUES

We are committed to the following values:

Serving Justice

Illegal discrimination impedes the peaceful co-existence of all people in the county. Therefore, we commit ourselves to serve justice through fairly, efficiently, and effectively investigating and resolving complaints, as well as educating the public about their civil rights and responsibilities.

Diversity

The recognition of diversity of ideas and backgrounds is integral to optimum human and organizational development. We are dedicated to reflecting and respecting diversity throughout our organization. We will respect the diversity of our community by providing compassionate and quality service to all.

Ethical Standards

Earning and sustaining the public trust, and maintaining the integrity of our workforce is crucial to the achievement of our stated goals. As public servants, we commit ourselves to the highest possible standards of integrity and honesty in our work.

Professional Excellence

The pursuit of excellence and demonstration of high professional standards are critical to our work. To ensure the best possible service to our community, we support continued training and encourage professional development.

Effective Communication

Clear communication fosters the cohesiveness and high performance of our organization. We strive for productive internal and external communication. We are committed to providing effective and responsive channels of communication in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Teamwork/Shared Leadership

The collaborative efforts of our staff members add value to our organization. Recognizing that each of us is a capable leader and team member, we agree to share leadership and join together as needed in order to cultivate an atmosphere where all of our knowledge, skills, and abilities can be best utilized to carry out our Mission and Vision.

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Office of Human Rights has adopted the following goals and strategies:

Human Rights Enforcement & Advancement

Goal

Serve Fairfax County through civil rights enforcement, complaint resolution, education and outreach.

Strategies

- Design and implement a formal mediation process to help resolve formal complaints filed with the Office.
- Evaluate and revise our enforcement processes to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- Continue implementation of the County's Fair Housing Plan in partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development and other public and private housing industry stakeholders.

- Enhance outreach to various community organizations and businesses to increase the dissemination of agency information and further compliance with the Ordinance.
- Expand the use of testing for enforcement purposes.

Customer Service

Goal

Consistently and efficiently provide superior service to the public and ensure that our service options and processes are transparent.

Strategies

- Revise, republish, and expand methods of disseminating all informational material to ensure that we are effectively communicating the nature of our services and processes to the public.
- Increase our availability to the public through enhanced internet and telephonic access.
- Continue to provide training opportunities for staff to enhance customer service skills.
- Continue to periodically survey our customers to assess their satisfaction with our services.

Performance Management

Goal

Proactively improve our performance by utilizing relevant objective measures in accord with the agency's mission, vision, and values.

Strategies

- Explore the creation of individual performance elements for housing cases and/or the adoption of a multi-rater system.
- Review and revise agency performance measures to ensure that they more effectively communicate the performance of the agency.
- Ensure that individual performance elements are in alignment with the agency performance measures.

Organizational Structure

Goal

Identify, develop, and maintain an organizational structure that implements the agency's objectives and priorities, and adopt systems and procedures that maximize efficient use of the agency's resources.

Strategies

- Explore how to make decisions on cases with the least amount of review while maintaining excellence.
- Develop and implement a mentoring and cross-training program within the agency.
- Investigate the creation of a complaint intake unit.
- Examine reconfiguration of office layout.
- Explore the creation of business functions, such as but not limited to:
 - Outreach and Education
 - Conciliation and Mediation
 - Article 2 Investigations
 - Article 1 investigations

Information Technology

Goal

Adopt and maintain effective IT solutions to enhance delivery of our agency's services.

Strategies

- Maintain current database (IQ) for the next 3 years (unless a more affordable, efficient alternative becomes available), improving it as needed to interface with the federal databases.
- Continue web based access to our database and case management systems.
- Enhance our reporting capabilities to facilitate our case tracking capacity.
- Migrate all office databases into IQ.
- Continue technology user group meetings as needed.
- Explore and potentially adopt scanning technology for the electronic use and storage of case-related documents.
- Explore a partnership with the Office of the County Attorney to electronically transmit and track case progress.
- Provide computer access in all agency conference rooms.
- Upgrade existing computer hardware.
- Expand existing technology to aid in the tracking of incoming call.
- Improve our communicative technologies with the hearing impaired.